

High Risk Areas in the Great Bear Rainforest Require Action: One Year Left to Go

March 31, 2008 Vancouver BC – A larger than life reminder is being unveiled today to remind us all that there is only one year left to fulfil the promise to protect the Great Bear Rainforest, a landmark promise made two years ago after a historic agreement was reached between environmentalists, logging companies, First Nations communities and British Columbia's Premier Gordon Campbell.

ForestEthics, Sierra Club BC and Greenpeace have collectively launched a billboard campaign that counts down the 12 remaining months to fulfil the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements by March 31, 2009.

"The world is watching to ensure British Columbia makes good on its promises to protect the largest tract of ancient temperate rainforest in the world," said Valerie Langer, ForestEthics.

The unveiling of the billboard, set along the busy stretch of highway to the ferry between Vancouver and Victoria, coincides with the release of new scientific analysis that shows critical ecosystems are at high risk in the Great Bear Rainforest. The data shows a clear gap between the current state of conservation and full ecosystem health for the region.

At stake are iconic areas of the Great Bear Rainforest where the tallest trees grow. The Province must initiate a regional plan to ensure conservation of these critical ecosystems. Without this plan the 2006 Great Bear Rainforest Agreements cannot be successful.

"The gap is clear, between Great Bear Rainforest commitments from 2006 and where we are now," says Jens Wieting, Sierra Club BC. "The proof of success will be if the government has addressed this gap by March 31st, 2009."

The increased level of concern arises from the following:

- The scientific analysis showing that the new protected areas and first suite of new logging rules still leave critical ecosystems in the Great Bear Rainforest at high risk.
- Secure funding for the independent science to guide progress was not allocated in last month's provincial budget.
- Two years has gone by without completing legislation to protect one third of the region (2.1 million hectares).
- There has been little progress in working out an overall regional plan to ensure ecological integrity and human wellbeing.

The Great Bear Rainforest, at 6.4 million hectares, is the largest tract of ancient temperate rainforest in the world and is home to the rare white Spirit Bear, Grizzlies and rich runs of salmon.

"Building a regional plan to ensure conservation is still possible within a year, but at this stage in the game, it will require a very dedicated effort by decision makers because the clock is ticking," says Amanda Carr, Greenpeace.

For more information, go to: www.savethegreatbear.org